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FOIE GRAS WITH KETCHUP  
UNDERSTANDING DIFFERENCES AND IMPROVING  
MILITARY  
COOPERATION WITH THE FRENCH

by

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### *Abstract*

This study assesses the prospect of improving military cooperation with the French through an examination of why French cooperation is desirable, how the French view the United States and the historical basis on which those views are founded, and the manner in which four additional factors complicate the security relationship.

The assessment of France in terms of military, economic, and political strength reveals a French capacity to disrupt American defense policy and, therefore, underscores the desirability of French military cooperation. The negative component of ambivalent French views of the United States appears to be based upon historical events in which American action abroad has impressed the French as inadequately deferent, obstructive of their aspirations to reclaim their prestige after World War II, and unilateral. Also complicating the security relationship are four additional factors, namely vestigial philosophical differences, misunderstanding of the tertiary status of the French Ministry of Defense, the language divide, and questions regarding mutual trust.

Inductive reasoning leads to six suggestions that American defense spokespersons should implement in order to improve the likelihood of military cooperation with the French. These include consulting France early and in proper sequence, treating France as a skeptical audience, considering ahead of time potential French responses, involving the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Presidential Palace, bridging the language divide, and observing proper etiquette.

## Chapter 1

### Diplomacy under Scrutiny

*'T is an old maxim in the schools,  
That flattery's the food of fools;  
Yet now and then your men of wit  
Will condescend to take a bit.*

—Jonathan Swift

Improving military cooperation with the French is important because France, a regional power and an international power, has the demonstrated capacity both to facilitate and to disrupt American defense policy. Improved military cooperation with the French requires that we understand, first, the extent of France's power as a nation and why its cooperation is desirable; second, how the French view the United States; third, upon which key historical issues those French views are based; and, fourth, factors that complicate the defense relationship.

Since the founding of our country, the American diplomat's view of France has sanguinely suggested a close and amicable security relationship. John Adams wrote in the late 1700s, "friendship between France and America is in the interest of both countries and the late alliance, so happily formed, is universally popular . . . ."<sup>1</sup> President Roosevelt declared on 14 July 1944, "Together, the French and American peoples stand today, united as they have always been when the cause of freedom was endangered."<sup>2</sup> President Kennedy stated in his address to the students of the French Institute of High



Studies for National Defense, “I think you will find that the people of the United States regard the French alliance as basic to our security, that we regard it as most essential in this country that France and the United States work closely together.”<sup>3</sup>

However, such diplomatic characterizations are misleading. The reality is less rosy. Consider the titles of some of the books describing politico-military cooperation between the two countries. They include *The Reluctant Ally: France and Atlantic Security*, *France and the United States: The Cold Alliance since World War II*, and *Uncertain Friendship: American-French Relations through the Cold War*. The security relationship between America and France, particularly since World War II, has been an ambivalent one, with both the camaraderie cited in diplomatic language and with bitter disagreement, too.

Even the military cooperation with France that played a critical role in the success of the American Revolution proves less idealistic under scrutiny. Specifically, French assistance to the Americans had much to do with competition with the British. Moreover, shortly after the American Revolution, the French would accuse the Americans of violating the Treaty of Alliance and the Treaty of Amity and Commerce of 1778, which allied France with the United States. These violations would lead, in turn, to French harassment of American merchant vessels and, ultimately, to a quasi-war with France.

Likewise, military cooperation with France during World War II, which is also frequently described by diplomats in simplistic and cheerful terms, appears less amiable under closer scrutiny. Animosity existed between the United States and France during World War II and afterwards. Anglo-American preferences for an alternative French leader to General Charles De Gaulle would result in lasting harm to the relationship when

General De Gaulle emerged as France's definitive leader, one whose political legacy remains substantial in contemporary France.

Disagreement has persisted through combined military operations of modern day. For instance, press reporting from March 2002 describes differences in the midst of the war on terrorism in Afghanistan. According to reports, the French refused to conduct aerial attacks upon certain targets near Gardez due to a divergence of opinion with the Americans over the possibility of collateral damage.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the French oppose the American concept of expanding the war on terrorism and conducting military operations in Iraq. Issues such as these over the half-century since World War II underscore the dark side of the relationship with France.

Contemporary public opinion polls clearly reflect both this dark side and the bright side of the relationship through their combined ambivalence. For instance, French public opinion polls from the year 2000 indicate that while 47 percent of the French believe that France and the United States are partners, another 47 percent combined believe that France and the United States are adversaries or both partners and adversaries, simultaneously.<sup>5</sup>

If we are to identify means to improved military cooperation with the French, we must dig beneath the polite banter of the diplomats. We must concede both the power that France wields in Europe and abroad, and the negative component of the ambivalent French views of the United States. We must then hypothesize as to the causes of negative French views and consider additional factors that create further hurdles in the relationship. Having done this, we will be in a position to suggest the approach most likely to improve military cooperation with the French.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> *Adams Family Correspondence*, vol III, *The Adams Papers* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1963), page 9.

<sup>2</sup> Samuel I. Rosenman, ed., *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, 1944-45, 1944-45 volume (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, undated), page 201.

<sup>3</sup> *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: John F. Kennedy, 1963* (Washington, D.C: Government Printing Office, 1964), page 289.

<sup>4</sup> Jacques Isnard, "Les Français ont été amenés à refuser des missions par les Américains," *Le Monde*, 10 March 2002, n.p.

<sup>5</sup> Gilles Corman, "France-Etats-Unis: Regards croisés" [public opinion poll on-line], 16 June 2000, n.p., on-line, Internet, 17 October 2001, available from [http://www.sofres.com/etudes/pol/160600\\_france-eu.htm](http://www.sofres.com/etudes/pol/160600_france-eu.htm).

## Chapter 2

### France Counts

*Ye sons of France, awake to glory!  
Hark! hark! what myriads bid you rise!*

—The Marseilles Hymn

With regard to why improved military cooperation with the French is desirable, in two words: France counts. Traditional assessments of the relative status of a country are based upon military, economic, and political strength. France proves formidable in all three. France's capacity to facilitate or obstruct American defense policy is a function of French strength in these areas.

### Military Strength

In the area of military strength, comparative statistics are instructive. Key areas in which French strength is evident include the amount of money spent on defense and number of personnel in the armed services. As a percentage of gross domestic product spent on defense, France spent 2.6 percent in 2000. Among European members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the percentage ranged from 0.8 through 5.2. The French percentage exceeded that of all other European members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization with the exception of Turkey (5.2 percent) and Greece (4.9 percent),

both of which are non-nuclear military powers and generally conceded to be inferior in comparison. As far as numbers of personnel in the armed forces in 2000, France ranked second among European members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization with 294,000 personnel. The range spanned from 8,000 through 609,700. France ranked second, behind only Turkey.<sup>1</sup> Among the countries of the European Union Armed Forces, France is the second leading contributor of personnel with 294,430. In this category, the range spanned from 899 through 321,000. France was behind only Germany.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to relatively superior resources devoted to defense and the number of personnel in the armed forces, the number of personnel permanently stationed abroad also underscores French military significance. As of December 2000, approximately 34,792 French troops were deployed throughout the Pacific, Africa, South America, the Middle East, and elsewhere in Europe. Among nations contributing to the European Union Armed Forces, the range for this value spanned from 23 through 36,459 personnel. Only Britain exceeded France. Moreover, Italy, which fell immediately behind France in this category, deployed only 6,459 personnel abroad.<sup>3</sup>

The high number of French military personnel deployed abroad is particularly significant in terms of relative military strength, given Europe's present lack of strategic aerial mobility. The Europeans are in the process of resolving this shortfall with the A 400M Military Transport Aircraft built by European Aeronautics Defence and Space Company. However, the first aircraft are not due to be delivered and in operation until 2008. In the interim, countries such as France with troops already deployed enjoy an advantage.

Also in terms of military strength, France is a world—as opposed to European—leader among deliverers of global arms and market share. The world’s top six deliverers include Russia, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and China. Among these countries, France ranked fourth in 2000, with deliveries valued at \$1.5 billion.<sup>4</sup>

French arms merchants have marketed aggressively and do not necessarily respect “American backyards” around the world. Dassault Aviation’s competition in South Korea for the multi-billion dollar contract to supply new military jets provides a compelling illustration. Other competitors for the contract included America’s Boeing, Russia’s Sukhoi, and Europe’s Eurofighter. The competitive nature of the French bid was impressive in view of the considerably greater depth of the American military relationship with South Korea. Equally impressive was the tenacity of the French competition, which featured a letter insisting upon a fair deal for France from French President Chirac to South Korean President Dim Dae-jung, a South Korean police raid on the local agent of Dassault Aviation suspected of bribery, and the arrest of two South Korean Air Force officials on charges of having received money from local agents of Dassault Aviation.<sup>5</sup> The incident makes clear the highly competitive nature of the global arms component of France’s military strength and underscores France’s international significance.

Finally concerning French military strength, France is one of seven publicly declared nuclear powers in the world. The French are presently completing upgrades to air- and sea-based components of their nuclear deterrent. Upgrades to their air-based component involve improvements to the nuclear missile carried by the Mirage 2000. Upgrades to the

sea-based component are more extensive and involve a new, third-generation submarine. Meanwhile, the French have eliminated their outdated tactical and ground-based nuclear missiles.<sup>6</sup>

### **Economic Strength**

Turning to economic strength, statistics provide evidence that France is not only among the leading economic powers of relatively wealthy Europe but also of the world. Key values for assessing the relative strength of a nation's economy include gross national income, gross national income per capita, and inflation. The World Bank provides each of these values for the year 2000.

Gross national income for 2000 is estimated at 1.43 trillion in current United States dollars. This ranks France as the fifth leading economy in the world for the year 2000, behind the United States, Japan, Germany, and the United Kingdom.<sup>7</sup> Meanwhile, gross national income per capita for 2000 is estimated at 23,670 in current United States dollars. This ranks France twenty-third among 206 countries.<sup>8</sup> As for inflation for the year 2000, it is estimated to have been 0.5 percent.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to these statistics from the World Bank, Christopher Caldwell of the Heritage Foundation provides other evidence of France's economic strength. Caldwell claims that the French economy is "the world's healthiest—outside of the United States." He notes that France's rate of job creation is second in the world, only behind that of the United States. He further notes that France's rate of job creation in the "high tech" sector is, in fact, the highest in the world.<sup>10</sup>

Concerning the outlook for France's future economic strength, Caldwell contends that it is promising. As an indicator, he points to France's success in the new "global

economy.” The irony, Caldwell notes, is that despite France’s vocal opposition to globalization, as reflected in the public opinion polls, France is actually participating with great success in the global economy. Caldwell cites the French economist and journalist Jacques Julliard who concedes, “The leftist criticism of globalization is very useful when it points out the arrogance of the great powers. But that doesn’t mean it represents an alternative.”<sup>11</sup>

### **Political Strength**

Perhaps, France’s greatest strength lies in political influence, through which France is able to leverage both military strength and economic strength. Persuasive evidence of France’s impressive capacity to shock the international community and to exert influence, particularly contrary to American wishes, is seen in three developments since 1999. These developments provide insight regarding the likelihood of French military cooperation with the United States.

The first development featured French Foreign Minister Vedrine at the Democracy Conference held in Warsaw, Poland, 25 through 27 June 1999. The advertised purpose of the conference was to “formulate an agenda for enhanced international cooperation, aimed at encouraging relevant international and regional institutions to be transparent, effective and supportive of efforts to strengthen democracy.”<sup>12</sup> Attending the conference were approximately 107 foreign ministers from around the world. Representatives of Poland, Chile, the Czech Republic, India, the Republic of Korea, Mali, and the United States sponsored the conference.

At the event’s conclusion, representatives of the participating nations signed a final communiqué, the Warsaw Declaration, which basically reaffirmed to prescription of



democracy as the way ahead for the world. However, among the representatives, one did not sign—French Foreign Minister Vedrine. In refusing to sign the document, he demonstrated France’s willingness to stand alone in defiance of the majority. He justified his refusal to sign by claiming, “the Western countries think a little too much that democracy is a religion and that the only thing you have to do is to convert.”

The shocking nature of the incident was reminiscent—on a lesser scale—of President De Gaulle’s announcement to withdraw from the integrated military structure of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization thirty-three years earlier. Minister Vedrine’s refusal to sign the final declaration at the conference sponsored in part by the United States, while surprising to some observers, was actually consistent with his public rejection of the unipolar world in which the United States is the sole superpower.

French rejection of America’s sole superpower status is often obfuscated in diplomatic language. However, French Foreign Minister Vedrine tends to be more straightforward in his opposition. For instance, in assessing the unipolar world he has criticized the lack of a counterweight and cited America’s subsequent “unilateralist temptation.” In order to compensate for the lack of a counterweight he has proposed Europe itself. Vedrine has emphasized the importance of “the emergence of several poles in the world capable of constituting a factor of balance.”<sup>13</sup> He adds, “Europe is an actor, a means of influence that is absolutely necessary for this multipolar world to arrive.”<sup>14</sup> In short, Europe must unite and act to curb the unilaterally oriented United States, according to Vedrine.

French opposition to America’s sole superpower position, as articulated by French Foreign Minister Vedrine, has manifested itself in the growing strength of the European

Security and Defense Identity, the second development that demonstrates French political strength. The European Security and Defense Identity is basically envisioned to be Europe's new, collective armed force. It began to take shape following the December 1998 summit in Saint Malo where French President Chirac and British Prime Minister Blair called upon other European nations to implement the provisions of the Common Foreign and Defense policy. Later, in December 1999 at the Helsinki European Council, the Europeans agreed to a "headline goal" in which Europe would develop the ability to deploy within a sixty-day notice and sustain for at least one year a military force of 50,000-60,000 troops. In February 2001, European representatives agreed to add to the Nice Treaty an amendment stipulating support for the European Security and Defense Identity's near-term operational capability.<sup>15</sup> The European Security and Defense Identity currently continues to progress.

While the British have equivocated, with the Conservative Party generally opposing the European Security and Defense Identity and Labour Party supporting it, French advocacy has been determined. American officials have expressed only qualified support. For instance, former Defense Secretary William Cohen claimed that the European Security and Defense Identity, if designed and implemented improperly, could lead to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization becoming a mere "relic."<sup>16</sup> Such comments underscore France's political strength. If successful, this challenge would mark a substantial French accomplishment, particularly given the remarkably effective role of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization over the past half-century in containing communism, confronting to the formidable Warsaw Pact throughout the Cold War, and

subsequently incorporating—with remarkable agility for a bureaucracy—some former members of the Warsaw Pact in the common struggle against post-Cold War challenges.

As the French have advocated the European Security and Defense Identity as a means to lessen dependence upon the American-dominated North Atlantic Treaty Organization, they have likewise advocated Galileo-European Satellite Navigation System in order to lessen or eliminate dependence upon Global Positioning System (GPS). This constitutes the third development that demonstrates French political strength. As the French transportation minister claimed, Galileo “permits the EU to shake off dependence” upon the American Global Positioning System. French advocacy of Galileo to other Europeans has been successful. On 26 March 2002 European Union officials reportedly approved funding for Galileo, despite strong American opposition.<sup>17</sup>

American opposition to Galileo has focused upon its redundancy and cost. Galileo is redundant inasmuch as America’s Global Positioning System has provided essentially the same service for years for free and could conceivably continue to do so indefinitely. Galileo is costly, both in terms of money and opportunity. With regard to the former, a Galileo system operational by 2008 is estimated to cost \$3.2 billion.<sup>18</sup> As to the latter, the same \$3.2 billion could be used to address other defense shortfalls among the European members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

In addition to redundancy and cost, American opposition to Galileo also has much to do with the competition for radio frequency. Should Galileo require frequencies presently used by the Global Positioning System, the American system could be limited in its effectiveness or require extensive modification for continued use. Given the present

extent of American military reliance upon Global Positioning System, the disagreement could be an expensive one for the United States.

Europe's decision to proceed with Galileo despite American concerns with redundancy, cost, and frequency management is significant. It underscores France's political influence in rallying other European countries to follow the French lead in controversial security matters on which the Americans have expressed disagreement.

Collectively, evidence of military, economic, and political strength indicates that France is a leading European and international power. As Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for European and NATO Affairs Lisa Bronson, aptly put it, "Our goal is to convince the French to be on our side. When we find ourselves in crisis, we should aim to limit the number of people who oppose us."<sup>19</sup> Such is the power that France wields.

### Notes

1 International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance, 2001-2002* (London: Oxford University Press, 2001), page 299.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, page 285.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, pages 55-56.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, page 298.

<sup>5</sup> Shin Yong-bae, "Decision on fighter project likely to stir diplomatic row, controversy over fairness," Korean Herald, 28 March 2002, n.p., on-line, Internet, 11 April 2002, available from [http://www.koreaherald.co.kr/SITE/data/html\\_dir/2002/03/28/200203280008.asp](http://www.koreaherald.co.kr/SITE/data/html_dir/2002/03/28/200203280008.asp).

<sup>6</sup> Ronald Tiersky, "French Military Reform and Restructuring," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Spring 1997, page 101.

<sup>7</sup> "Total GNI 2000, Atlas method," 2001 World Development Indicators database, World Bank, 16 July 2001.

<sup>8</sup> "GNI per capita 2000, Atlas method and PPP," 2001 World Development Indicators database, World Bank, 16 July 2001.

<sup>9</sup> "France Data Profile," The World Bank Group, April 2002, n.p., on-line, Internet, 8 April 2002, available from <http://devdata.worldbank.org/external/CPProfile.asp?SelectedCountry=FRA&CCODE=FRA&CNAME=France&PTYPE=CP>.

<sup>10</sup> Christopher Caldwell, "Vedrinism: France's Global Ambitions," *Policy Review* no. 103 (October – November 2000), n.p., on-line, Internet, 6 March 2002, available from <http://www.policyreview.org/oct00>.

## Notes

<sup>11</sup> Caldwell, n.p.

12, "A Bit of Discord," 9 July 2000, *Warsaw Voice* no. 28 (611), n.p., on-line, Internet, 13 April 2002, available from [http://www.warsawvoice.pl/v611/index\\_download.html](http://www.warsawvoice.pl/v611/index_download.html).

13 French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine, intervention at Conference of Ambassadors, Paris, 28 August 28.

14 French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine, intervention at North Atlantic Council meeting, Brussels, 8 December 1998.

15 International Institute for Strategic Studies, page 283.

16 Jim Garamone, "Cohen Says Allies Must Invest or NATO Could Become 'Relic,'" American Forces Information Services, 5 December 2000, n.p., on-line, Internet, 5 October 2001, available from [http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Dec2000/n12052000\\_200012055.html](http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Dec2000/n12052000_200012055.html).

17 "EU sets up funding for GPS competitor," *Washington Times*, 27 March 2002, n.p., on-line, Internet, 2 April 2002, available from <http://www.washtimes.com/business/20020327-25239768.htm>.

18 Ibid, n.p.

19 Lisa Bronson, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for European and NATO Affairs, Office of the Secretary of Defense, interviewed by author, 19 October 2001.

## Chapter 3

### French Perceptions of the United States

*A generous friendship no cold medium knows, Burns with one love, with one resentment glows.*

—Alexander Pope

If we recognize France as a power to be reckoned with, then the opinions of the French people who democratically elect their political leaders must also be of significance to us. Of particular interest would be French perceptions of the American exercise of power. So, how do the French perceive the Americans?

The public opinion poll constitutes the most commonly used means of objectively estimating public views. Views of a particular subset of the population are extrapolated to estimate the views held by the entire population, in our case the French people. Four polls conducted between May 2000 and January 2002 yield useful insight.

To those unfamiliar with French sensitivity to American “hyperpower,” as French Foreign Minister Vedrine refers to it, polls reflecting French views of American influence in such areas as French cuisine and advertising may seem puzzling or irrelevant. However, such views are precisely the point: the French are concerned by American influence in French domestic areas as minute as cuisine and advertising. This French concern reflects sensitivity that, in turn, influences the extent to which the French are willing to cooperate with the United States in military affairs, among other areas. These

four particular polls not only demonstrate French sensitivity but also suggest American approaches that are more likely to result in military cooperation with the French.

### **Positive and Negative Impressions**

The French-American Foundation conducted the first poll of interest from 16 to 18 May 2000. Samples included 1,000 French citizens and 1,000 Americans. Polling of French citizens involved face-to-face interviews of persons 18 years and older, while polling of American citizens was accomplished by telephone. The results cited below pertain only to the views of the French citizens.

When asked which words or images came to mind when thinking of America, 56 percent of those images or words were negative, and 42 percent of them were positive. Among the 56 percent of negative words or images were violence (21 percent), bad temperament (14 percent), excessive international influence (11 percent), hegemonic economy (7 percent), and poor health (3 percent). Among the positive words or images were grandeur (14 percent), power (12 percent), wealth (4 percent), liberty (4 percent), advanced technology (4 percent), modernism (3 percent), and dynamism (1 percent).<sup>1</sup>

When asked to identify two items from a list of perceived objectives of American foreign policy, 63 percent chose protection of American interests, 51 percent chose imposition of American wishes on the rest of the world, 28 percent chose maintenance of peace, 11 percent chose development of democracy around the world, and 5 percent were without an opinion.

Pertaining to American influence specifically in France, French respondents were asked to assess the extent—"excessive," "insufficient," or "not problematic"—to which American influence touched specific sectors of French culture. Respondents answered

“excessive” in the following areas and percentages: television: 65 percent, cinema: 57 percent, new communications technologies such as the Internet and multimedia: 43 percent, and music: 37 percent.

Researchers probed the cultural influence question deeper and asked French respondents to rate, using the same scale, four other areas pertaining to culture. Respondents answered “excessive” in the following areas and percentages: advertising: 35 percent, language: 34 percent, cuisine: 26 percent, and clothing: 22 percent. These data present clear evidence of the extent of French sensitivity to American international influence in France. Think about it: of a population of approximately 60 million, approximately 13 million French think American influence upon their clothing is excessive. Only an imprudent American policy maker would dismiss the views of these 13 million French citizens, as puzzling as their views might initially seem.

French sensitivity to American influence in France is not a recent phenomenon. As Philip Gordon, Director, Center on the United States and France, at the Brookings Institute points out, “In the 1920s, 1930s and particularly in the period following the Second World War, the French worried about ‘coca-colonization’ (the notion that the threat from the American soft drink symbolized a broader cultural danger) and began to augment measures to defend the French language, cuisine, and art world . . . .”<sup>2</sup> In other words, there is some depth to this French concern regarding American influence in French domestic affairs, despite the fact that some Americans may prefer to dismiss these concerns as frivolous. Doing so, however, would be to remain ignorant of the various factors that motivate the French to cooperate—or not to cooperate—with the United States in military affairs.



## **Preferences between American Political Parties**

A second poll, conducted by Group CSA and released in Paris on 19 November 2000, describes French preferences between the two major American political parties. The poll included a sample of 1,000 French citizens. Researchers asked citizens the following question: “If you were an American citizen, for which candidate would you vote?” Proffered options included “the Democrat Al Gore” and “the Republican George W. Bush.” Overall, 66 percent selected Al Gore and 34 percent selected George W. Bush.<sup>3</sup>

## **Views of American International Policy**

Insight into why the French preferred the Democrat to the Republican appeared in a subsequent poll released on 15 August 2001 by the Pew Research Center. The focus of the poll was American international policy. The sample included approximately 4,000 adults in France, Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom. The results cited here focus upon results of the poll conducted in France.

Among the French respondents, 85 percent opined that President Bush makes decisions “based only on U.S. interests.” Another 85 percent disapproved of President Bush’s rejection of the Kyoto Agreement. Another 75 percent disapproved of America’s development of missile defense and withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty.<sup>4</sup> These figures suggest which specific aspect of American international policy tends to alienate the French. That aspect is unilateralism.

French aversion to American unilateralism is logical given the prominent role that independence plays in French foreign policy (to include defense policy). French policy makers are clear about it. In describing the principles of their contemporary foreign

policy they state, “France values its independence highly . . . .”<sup>5</sup> Perceived American unilateralism and publicly declared French independence are problematic where cooperation is concerned.

Additional evidence of French rejection of unilateralism appears in the same poll. Specifically, 59 percent of French respondents disapproved of the manner in which President Bush was handling international policy, while 68 percent approved of the manner in which President Clinton had handled international policy.<sup>6</sup> The difference suggests that the French do not disapprove of all international policy by the Americans, but of international policy perceived to be conceived and implemented unilaterally by the United States, as opposed to collectively among the United States and allies. Among those allies, of course, is France.

### **Views of Globalization**

Group CSA and the French daily *l'Humanité* jointly conducted the fourth poll that speaks to French perceptions of American influence. The poll was released in Paris on 28 January 2002. This particular poll focused upon French views of globalization. Globalization refers to the transfer of information, money, and services around the world with general disregard for national borders.

With regard specifically to globalization, respondents were asked to describe their views in terms of “enthusiasm,” “confidence,” “indifference,” “concern,” or “hostility.” Sixteen percent responded favorably to globalization (that is by choosing “enthusiasm” or “confidence”). Thirteen percent responded in a neutral fashion (that is by choosing “indifference”). Sixty-eight percent responded negatively (that is by choosing “concern” or “hostility”). Another three percent either did not respond or claimed none of the

offered options fit their sentiments.<sup>7</sup> In short, the majority of the French do not like globalization.

What is the connection between French views of globalization and French views of America? The connection is that many among the French consider globalization and Americanization to be synonymous. French expert Philip Gordon, in conjunction with Sophie Meunier of Princeton University, explains that French resistance to globalization was symbolized by a Frenchman's attack upon a uniquely American phenomenon, McDonalds. The celebrated sheep farmer, José Bové, earned acclaim by taking apart a McDonald's in France in August 1999, a feat that earned him popularity in France. From the French perspective, the problem is that globalization, or Americanization, promotes American views, interests, and culture while it simultaneously obstructs the French drive for increased international influence.<sup>8</sup>

Collectively, what can we infer from these opinion polls regarding French perceptions of the United States? We can draw three inferences. First, the French remain sensitive to American influence in French domestic affairs eight decades after such concerns initially developed. Second, the French are also sensitive to American influence in the world outside of France. Third, in the area of American foreign policy, the French prefer collectivist policy, which gives them a voice, to unilateral policy, which does not.

Learning about French perceptions is useful if we are to propose means to improve military cooperation with France. However, learning about French perceptions, per se, is inadequate. One must dig further to determine the factors that influence French perceptions of the United States.

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## **Chapter 4**

### **Historical Issues Influencing French Perceptions**

*History is little else than a picture of human crimes and misfortunes.*

—François Marie Arouet de Voltaire

Historical issues lend insight into contemporary French perceptions of the United States. Significant among these historical issues are World War II, Dien Bien Phu, the Suez Crisis, French withdrawal from the integrated military structure of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Operation El Dorado Canyon, and the debate over command of Allied Forces South.

A common American perspective of history is that we saved the French during World War II and the French have been inadequately grateful ever since. The French perspective of history since World War II differs.

### **World War II**

Unlike the United States or Britain, France was a divided country during the War, with both Nazi sympathizers known as the Vichy French and Nazi opposition known as the French Resistance. Between the two, the Vichy constituted the vast majority. The Vichy French were generally associated with the right end of the political spectrum, given the collaboration of France's right wing parties with the occupying German Nazis. The French Resistance, on the other hand, included two major elements, namely the

Gaullists and the French Communists, hence the association of the French Resistance with the left.<sup>1</sup> As Marianne Debouzy, a student in Paris in the 1940s, recalls, “many people who were members of the Communist Party had worked in the Resistance, in the railroads, in the mines, in the steel industry . . . .”<sup>2</sup>

Victory for the French Resistance meant rising tides for the French Communists following World War II. Two factors account for their improved status. First, the French Communists were legitimized as French nationalists. Second, members of the French right were compromised and lost their legitimacy as a result of their support for the French Vichy and the German Nazis.<sup>3</sup> As Debouzy further explains, “After the war, about 25 percent of the voters voted Communist . . . because it represented what seemed to be most progressive (sic) in social terms to many . . . .”<sup>4</sup> The resurgence of communism in France proved awkward in Franco-American relations, given subsequent French and American membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, which opposed the communist Warsaw Pact during the subsequent Cold War.

While the leader of the French Resistance is recognized today as General de Gaulle, recognition was not so clear-cut during the War. In fact, American leaders and—to a lesser extent—British leaders questioned de Gaulle’s self-appointment. Yet, this was natural. How could they be certain that the French wanted him as their leader? They justified their initial refusal to recognize him based upon his self-appointment and their perception of him as excessively ambitious, dictatorial, and too closely aligned with the communists in France. Accordingly, the Americans and the British identified—ultimately in vain—a preferable French leader in the form of Henri Giraud.<sup>5</sup> And why

not? After all, the Americans and the British were the leading powers among the Allies at the time.

In addition to concerns with General de Gaulle's style and political associations, American reluctance to recognize the self confident de Gaulle had also to do with President Roosevelt's view of France. Roosevelt perceived little change in conditions in France following German occupation. He viewed the French as collaborators with the Nazis. He preferred to see World War II conclude with France no longer among the great world powers but among the more humble European powers.<sup>6</sup> A more humble French leader, therefore, would have been more appropriate, in the American view. Despite American preferences, de Gaulle prevailed. In October 1944 the Americans finally recognized de Gaulle as the leader of the French.<sup>7</sup>

De Gaulle would bear a grudge and his supporters would remember American and British opposition.<sup>8</sup> They would associate it long after World War II with resistance to French aspirations for international standing. To contend that such grudges are irrelevant to contemporary French military cooperation would be to ignore the fact that de Gaulle's influence remains alive and formidable in contemporary French politics. For example, the term "Gaullist," frequently used to refer to French politicians today, refers to one who follows the post-World War II political movement initiated by de Gaulle. Moreover, in characterizing the principles of their present day foreign policy, the French government officials cite the continuation of the principles "which guided General de Gaulle's foreign policy during the 1960s . . . ."<sup>9</sup>

## **Dien Bien Phu**

The second historical issue concerns Dien Bien Phu, a valley in Vietnam and the site of a pivotal defeat for French colonialism. Opposing Viet Minh forces defeated the French there on 7 May 1954 following a 56-day siege. As a result of their loss, the French would withdraw from a country they had colonized for approximately 80 years. Moreover, the defeat at Dien Bien Phu would mark the end of French colonial presence in Indochina.

Early in World War II, President Roosevelt articulated American opposition to future colonization by co-signing the Atlantic Charter with British Prime Minister Churchill on 14 August 1941. The charter specified, “. . . the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live; and . . . sovereign rights and self government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them . . . .”<sup>10</sup> However, at the conclusion of World War II, the French demonstrated interest in re-establishing their colonies, one of which was Vietnam. President Roosevelt’s successor, President Truman, maintained Roosevelt’s anti-colonial position by declaring support for Vietnamese self-government. The French subsequently allowed some degree of increased Vietnamese autonomy. However, Vietnamese displeasure with the limited extent of the autonomy resulted in Viet Minh attacks upon French interests in Hanoi in December 1946.<sup>11</sup>

American policy at the time was not to participate directly in the armed conflict. However, policy makers reversed their direction when the Communist Chinese began to provide military assistance to the Viet Minh. The change in American policy was based upon the perception that assistance to the Viet Minh from the Communist Chinese



marked a grave international threat.<sup>12</sup> From the evolving American perspective, while European colonization was undesirable, the threat of communism was more undesirable.

Subsequent American assistance to the French by 1954 was primarily monetary. In that same year, the tide began to turn against the French. French forces at Dien Bien Phu attempted to draw enemy Viet Minh forces into a conventional conflict that would favor French forces. While the French succeeded in drawing in the Viet Minh, subsequent combat favored the Viet Minh, instead. As the prospect of Viet Minh victory loomed, French officials sought not additional American economic support but rather direct American military intervention. Requested intervention included close air support and air interdiction.<sup>13</sup> Yet, Congressional support for such direct military intervention was not forthcoming.<sup>14</sup> The French would have to fight alone.

The head of the French General Directorate for External Security described the French in the years following World War II as needing “glory and the dominant personality of General de Gaulle to expunge their collective shame.”<sup>15</sup> Instead of glory, they received from the Americans discouragement regarding the continuation of their colonial empire, ultimately inadequate aid with which to defeat the Viet Minh, and a negative response to their request for direct military intervention at Dien Bien Phu in 1954.

The loss was a significant one for the French. According to historian Alistair Horne, “psychologically, there was no more devastating defeat ever inflicted on a Western regular army by a colonial ‘resistance movement,’ and it was to have far-reaching repercussions in Algeria.”<sup>16</sup> As a result of this devastating defeat, the French would feel betrayed by the Americans<sup>17</sup> and perceive them as untrustworthy and not supportive of

France's bid to return to international status. Those perceptions would become even more negative in the course of the next two years.

### **Suez Crisis**

The third historical issue involves the Suez Crisis of 1956. It marked a shift in French focus from colonial interests in Indochina to those in Africa. French colonial interests in Africa were essential to French status because the scale of their interests differentiated France from most of the other powers in Europe.<sup>18</sup> Two years after Dien Bien Phu, American anti-colonialism and the mere lack of direct American military intervention in support of beleaguered French forces turned into a threat of armed opposition when the United States with an unlikely partner, the Soviet Union, thwarted the Anglo-French-Israeli invasion of Egypt.

French interest in Egypt at the time was twofold. First, the French, like the British, sought to overturn Colonel Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal Company. Second, and more importantly, by eliminating Colonel Nasser, the French sought to cut Egyptian aid to the Algerian National Liberation Front that had for the past several years been trying to drive the French from France's most prized colony, Algeria. French Prime Minister Guy Mollet believed that successful opposition of Egyptian Colonel Nasser would lead to the collapse of the Algerian rebel movement and, in turn, the Algerians would "then peaceably accept the blessings of French colonial rule."<sup>19</sup> Historian Hugh Thomas reached a similar conclusion regarding the French Prime Minister's interest in Egypt, namely, "For Mollet, the supreme objective was to win the war in Algeria."<sup>20</sup>

By mid-October 1956, the French were so confident of combined victory in Egypt that they toughened their hitherto more careful policy toward the Algerian rebels by

arresting their leader and imprisoning him in Paris.<sup>21</sup> On 5 November 1956, 500 French and 600 British paratroopers landed at Port Said.<sup>22</sup> The course of events took a drastic change, however, when American and Soviet officials demanded that the French, British, and Israelis terminate the operation. They did so. Withdrawing French forces proceeded west to Algeria to address the growing insurrection there. The dominance of American foreign policy in the Cold War era was not lost on the French, British, or Israelis.

The significance of the Suez Crisis is fivefold, according to historian Alistair Horne. First, the Algerian rebel movement, which was receiving aid from the Egyptians, was morally uplifted. Second, arms that the French and British were forced to abandon in Egypt were, in turn, provided to the rebel movement in Algeria. Third, French military personnel who proceeded from Egypt to Algeria were greatly discouraged. Fourth, discontent arose among the French paratroopers who would eventually plot to assassinate President de Gaulle. Fifth, French trust in the Americans was completely lost. According to historian Alistair Horne, “the lesson they learnt was never to trust the Americans and probably not the British either.”<sup>23</sup>

Another result of the Suez Crisis was an expanded war in Algeria. In his book, *A Savage War of Peace*, historian Alistair Horne describes the heavy French investment in the Algerian War, which lasted from 1954 until 1962. The war would result in approximately 17,456 dead and 64,985 wounded on the French side, and approximately 300,000 dead on the Algerian side.<sup>24</sup>

Ultimately, the French would lose the war. Its reverberations can still be felt today in France. A veteran of the Algerian War, retired General Aussaresses, made the startling admission in his book published in 2001, *Special Services, Algeria 1955-1957*, that

French soldiers routinely engaged in torture of Algerians. Human rights groups are now pressing for punishment and casting an unfavorable light on France in the process.

### **Withdrawal from the Integrated Military Structure**

The fourth historical issue is that of French withdrawal from the integrated military structure of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and insistence that elements of the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (NATO) leave French territory by April 1967. French officials announced the withdrawal on 10 March 1966.

Several factors prompted President de Gaulle to make the decision. Just as he had perceived inadequate respect from the Americans and the British during World War II, he felt that the manner in which they conducted themselves as the leading powers within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization also demonstrated inadequate deference to France. For instance, they had rejected his proposed three-way leadership—American, British and French—of the organization. Next, President de Gaulle was wary of potentially coerced involvement in future wars in which the dominant powers might want to involve the North Atlantic Treaty Organization but in which France did not wish to participate. Finally, President de Gaulle was not an advocate of military integration, a concept that the Americans favored.<sup>25</sup>

In addition to startling both fellow members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and members of the international community more generally, the announcement necessitated quick action to re-establish facilities outside of France. For instance, the Belgians hastily converted an army camp near Mons as the new facility for Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe. Meanwhile, the Americans transferred

from France 61,000 personnel, including active duty military personnel and their dependents, from thirty military bases in France.<sup>26</sup>

Reaction among American officials reflected a perceived lack of gratitude among the French following assistance to France during World War II and World War I. The American Secretary of State sarcastically inquired whether the withdrawal from France should include the removal of the buried bodies of American military personnel killed while defending France. Moreover, the American ambassador to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization suggested that the organization would nonetheless make use of military facilities in France as necessary should another war take place in Europe.<sup>27</sup>

Yet, France's withdrawal from the integrated military structure was not tantamount to termination of the Franco-American security relationship. To the contrary, France maintained membership—albeit a unique form of membership—in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Moreover, France and the United States continued to confront common threats, one of which was terrorism. Divergent opinions regarding the proper solutions to terrorism, however, would continue to split France and the United States.

### **Operation El Dorado Canyon**

The fifth historical issue concerns an example of such divergent approaches to terrorism, namely Operation El Dorado Canyon. The operation featured airstrikes launched on 14 April 1986 against terrorist targets in Tripoli and Benghazi, Libya. President Reagan ordered the airstrikes in retaliation for the bombing, reportedly carried out at Libyan direction, of a West Berlin discotheque that killed an American serviceman and others. Participating aircraft included both United States Air Force aircraft stationed

in the United Kingdom and United States Navy aircraft based on carriers afloat within range of Libya.

In order to shorten flight times for the former aircraft, American officials requested French permission for United States Air Force aircraft stationed in the United Kingdom to overfly France en route to the targets in Libya. The French did not grant permission. Accordingly, American pilots were required to fly approximately 1,200 more miles around the Iberian Peninsula from the United Kingdom to Libya. One United States Air Force aircraft based in the United Kingdom was lost in the raid.

Subsequent American criticism of France included the familiar theme of French ingratitude. Additionally, critics wondered if aircrew fatigue induced by the lengthy flying time caused by flying around—versus over—France had contributed to the loss of the aircraft. Not being able to fly over France added between six and seven hours of flight time and necessitated additional aerial refueling.<sup>28</sup>

In response to American criticism, French Foreign Minister Jean-Bernard Raimond cited France's strong aversion to American unilateralism. He claimed, "it would have meant agreeing to be associated with measures that had been decided unilaterally by the United States without consultation."<sup>29</sup>

### **Allied Forces Southern Europe Debate**

French objection to American unilateralism would surface, again, about one decade later in the form of a vigorous debate regarding leadership of Allied Forces Southern Europe (AFSOUTH), the sixth historical issue. Allied Forces Southern Europe is the North American Treaty Organization's regional command located in Naples, Italy. Prior to the debate, it had been an American-led command. The French led the effort for

conversion to a European-led command. The debate spiraled to the highest political levels, ultimately including an exchange of letters between French President Chirac and American President Clinton. President Chirac contended that the Europeans should lead the command. President Clinton maintained that America should continue to lead it.<sup>30</sup> Ultimately, the American position prevailed.

French officials point to the Allied Forces Southern Europe debate as the issue that poses the greatest current threat to security cooperation. They claim that the issue still resonates negatively among some French officials, particularly those who were directly involved in the debate.<sup>31</sup> Other European diplomats note the negative impact of the debate, as well. For instance, one European diplomat observed that prior to the debate there had been a convergence through the mid 1990s between the United States and France on security matters. However, the debate had generated much bitterness and left a large scar on Franco-American relations.<sup>32</sup> Another European diplomat made a similar observation of the aftermath of the debate, opining that its acrimonious nature had resulted in an “institutional scar.”<sup>33</sup>

The “convergence” to which the former European diplomat referred was the prospect of France returning to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization’s integrated military structure, the structure from which President de Gaulle had announced French withdrawal in 1966. Such reintegration would have marked a momentous event in the history of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the history of Franco-American relations. During a press briefing in July 1997, Defense Secretary Cohen stated, “We would like to have the French become fully integrated . . .” However, he opined that “AFSOUTH” was the

primary potential obstacle to such re-integration.<sup>34</sup> Ultimately, it was, and the hope for French reintegration into the military structure vanished.

From a review of these six historical issues, the theme that emerges is one of frustrated French ambitions followed by resentment of the United States. As French officials concede, these historical issues—in particular, the most recent one—have played a role in shaping French views of the United States.

A review of these six historical issues also suggests the French perspective of security relations with the United States since World War II. From the French perspective, the Americans and the British did not afford General de Gaulle the respect to which he was entitled during World War II. After World War II, simultaneous American opposition both to colonialism and to communism led to an ambivalent American foreign policy that, in turn, resulted in inadequate assistance to the French at Dien Bien Phu in 1954, French defeat, and the loss of French colonies in Indochina. Worse, American intervention in Egypt during the Suez Crisis of 1956 embarrassed France and led ultimately to France's loss of the Algerian War by 1962 and the loss of France's most important colony. Continued domination by the United States in the post-World War II era included American control of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and a refusal to allow France to serve as one of the three key decision makers. Moreover, the Americans unilaterally conceived a plan to bomb terrorist targets in Libya in 1986 and sought to involve France only at the last minute by overflying French territory. The same sort of American unilateralism manifested itself when the Americans refused to transfer to the Europeans command of Allied Forces Southern Europe.



The utility of understanding this French perspective lies in allowing us to classify the French audience as friendly, skeptical, or hostile.<sup>35</sup> The perspective described above suggests that the French audience—the same one we will approach with proposals for military cooperation in the future—is a skeptical one.

### Notes

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- 22 Horne, page 163.
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- 33 European Diplomat (2), identity withheld at the request of the contributor, interviewed by author, 17 October 2001.
- 34 Department of Defense News Briefing, 6 July 1997, n.p., on-line, Internet, 1 November 2001, available from [http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Jul1997/t07091997\\_t706enrt.html](http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Jul1997/t07091997_t706enrt.html).
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## Chapter 5

### Additional Factors Complicating the Relationship

*And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.*

—Genesis 11:6-7

In addition to historically based, negative French perceptions of the United States, four other key factors tend to complicate the security relationship between the United States and France. These include philosophical differences that arose early in our nation's history, the frequently misunderstood domestic status of the French Ministry of Defense, the language divide, and concerns with mutual trust. Clearer understanding of these four issues is necessary if we are to improve military cooperation with the French.

#### Philosophical Differences

Philosophical differences between the United States and France arose initially, in part, as a result of the French Revolution that began in 1789. While American colonists were as vigorously opposed to King George III as were the French to King Louis XVI, overthrowing the rule of King George III was sufficient for the Americans. Some Americans considered unnecessarily violent the beheading of the King Louis XVI and the

subsequent beheadings of both French Royalists and, later, more moderate, former supporters of the royalty.

Americans who were troubled by the French Revolution generally subscribed to the views of the British writer Edmund Burke. In 1790 he recorded his concerns in the form of *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. The essence of Burke's criticism was that the French revolutionaries had gone too far. Their zeal had replaced their reason. Accordingly, instead of modifying unsatisfactory elements of French society, they had more nearly destroyed all of society and its institutions. Among Americans concerned by the French Revolution was Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton.

Other Americans, however, were not as troubled by the French Revolution. Prominent among them was Thomas Jefferson. Partly as a result of divergent political views arising from the French Revolution, two political camps emerged: the Jeffersonians, who preferred the French to the English, and the Hamiltonians, who preferred the English to the French. The Jeffersonians generally did not trust government institutions, hence the lack of concern with French revolutionary destruction of institutions there. The Hamiltonians, on the other hand, generally viewed government institutions as important, especially in stabilizing the impact of prosperity upon society.<sup>1</sup>

As Hamilton expert Hal Bidlack of the United States Air Force Institute of National Security Studies points out, by the 1840s the Hamiltonian and Jeffersonian camps had transformed and the scope of American political preferences had expanded well beyond those for England or France.<sup>2</sup> However, vestiges of these philosophical differences persist today, if only in the form of opposition among some conservatives—for many of whom Edmund Burke remains an icon—to radical anti-authoritarianism still associated

with the French. An example of such modern philosophical opposition to the French can be noted in the article, “A Tale of Two Revolutions.” The article appeared in *Freeman*, a magazine sponsored by the Libertarian Party. Author Robert Peterson claims, “whereas the American Revolution brought forth a relatively free economy and limited government, the French Revolution brought forth first anarchy, then dictatorship.”<sup>3</sup> The point is that philosophical differences regarding the French and dating to the 1700s still animate political discussion in this country today.

### **Misunderstanding of the Domestic Status of the Ministry of Defense**

Just as philosophical differences complicate the relationship, so too does common American misunderstanding of the status of the French Ministry of Defense in comparison with other French governmental bodies. In a word, the status of the French Ministry of Defense in defense policy is tertiary. Palais de l’Elysée (the Presidential Palace) enjoys “reserved domain” over defense policy. “Reserved domain” is a reference to the division of authority between the French president and the French prime minister. The two areas in which the French president exercises primary responsibility are defense policy, as noted, and foreign policy. After Palais de l’Elysée, Quai d’Orsay (the Foreign Ministry) exerts significant influence over defense policy. French officials explain that in the French culture, defense policy is merely an element of broader foreign policy, hence the superiority of the Foreign Ministry in this regard.<sup>4</sup> Finally, among the government institutions that handle defense policy, comes Hotel de Brienne (the Defense Ministry).<sup>5</sup>

Leo Michel, Director of North Atlantic Treaty Organization Policy, Office of the Secretary of Defense, believes the tertiary status of the Ministry of Defense is connected

with the military's association with attempts to assassinate President de Gaulle. Michel, a fluent French speaker, has spent years observing the French, both in his current position and previously as a journalist living and working in France. Extreme dissatisfaction with President de Gaulle's decision to withdraw France from the Algerian War led to attempts upon his life. One attempt took place on 9 September 1961 at Pont-sur-Seine and another on 22 August 1962 at Vallacoublay.<sup>6</sup> Michel describes these assassination attempts as "a watershed event from which the military has not yet recovered." As evidence, he claims that French military officers even today remain wary of criticizing French political positions, particularly when they are in the presence of members of the French Foreign Ministry. He notes the military officers' contrasting candor in the absence of members of the French Foreign Ministry.<sup>7</sup>

Following these attempts upon his life, President De Gaulle addressed a convention of eighty flag rank officers in Strasbourg on 23 November 1961. He told them, "... once the State and the nation have chosen their path, military duty is spelled out once and for all. Outside its guidelines there can't be, there are only lost soldiers." One wonders when complete faith and trust in the Ministry of Defense will be restored.

### **The Language Divide**

In addition to philosophical differences and the misunderstood status of the Ministry of Defense, the language divide also complicates the relationship. French officials concede that most French government officials whose duty involves regular contact with the United States are, in fact, trained to speak English. They note, for instance, that for military officers destined for flag rank, the study of English is practically imperative. However, they also note that an American official who cannot speak French may opt not

to coordinate with or seek assistance from a French counterpart due to concern that the language divide is too formidable. Accordingly, these French officials suggest that increased language capabilities on both sides would be helpful.<sup>8</sup>

American officials whose duty involves contact with the French express similar views. For instance, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for European and NATO Affairs Lisa Bronson opines that the payback for knowing French is disproportionately high, in comparison with other foreign languages, as is the penalty for not speaking French.<sup>9</sup> Her subordinate, Leo Michel, Director of North Atlantic Treaty Organization Policy, opines that the language divide is a problem. He notes that the French naturally prefer to express themselves in a sophisticated fashion that presents problems for American non-speakers of French or Americans whose understanding of French is only basic.<sup>10</sup> Finally, State Department French Desk Officer Christopher Davis, a French speaker who has spent a career dealing with the French both in Washington, D.C. and in various American embassies in francophone countries, describes the language divide as “significant.”<sup>11</sup>

European observers also note the obstacles that the language divide poses to military cooperation between the United States and France. One European embassy official assigned to Washington notes that failure to communicate clearly tends to reinforce caricatures on both the French and American sides.<sup>12</sup> Another European embassy official opines that there are too few Americans who speak French and the paucity contributes to damaging miscommunication.<sup>13</sup>

## Concerns with Mutual Trust

A fourth factor that complicates contemporary military cooperation with the French concerns allegations of espionage, none of which either country has officially conceded. In February 1995, French officials expelled five Americans from Paris on charges that they had been involved in espionage against France. According to the French press, members of the Central Intelligence Agency had attempted to recruit an economic advisor to the French prime minister.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, Robert Baer, a former case officer in the Central Intelligence Agency, provides additional details of alleged clandestine operations conducted in France in his recent book, *See No Evil: The True Story of a Ground Soldier in the CIA's War on Terrorism*. He describes, for instance, running French agents and proposing telephonic wire taps in France to collect information on illegal arms trafficking and terrorism while State Department personnel fret over the possibility of French discovery.<sup>15</sup>

Yet the allegations of espionage apply to France, as well. In fact, officials of the French General Directorate of External Security reportedly target technical data. Reportedly, the French have taken telecommunications satellite technology from Loral Space Systems and from Hughes Aircraft, military communications technology from Lockheed Missile and Space Company, advanced telecommunications technology from TRW, and microwave technologies from GTE.<sup>16</sup>

Meanwhile, in December 2001 French officials jailed a French army major for two years following conviction for treason. While the major was serving as chief of staff of the French military delegation to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, he ostensibly had provided lists of potential bombing targets in Yugoslavia and Kosovo to a Yugoslav



military attaché.<sup>17</sup> The significance lies in the fact that the United States is the country whose military carries out the preponderance of aerial bombardment missions for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Therefore, the French major's treason might have put American airmen in harm's way, a compelling reason not to involve the French in operational planning.

More recently, North Atlantic Treaty Organization officials are reportedly investigating allegations that a captain in the French Army warned Bosnian Serb President Radovan Karadzic, wanted on charges of wartime atrocities by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in the Hague, that an American Special Forces team from Tuzla was on the way to raid his stronghold in Foca. According to the report, Karadzic received the warning and was able to escape over land to nearby Montenegro.<sup>18</sup> In this case, the alleged treason evidently foiled an operation attempted by American military personnel, another compelling reason not to involve the French in operational planning.

Richard Perle is currently serving as Chairman, Defense policy Board, Department of Defense. He expressed his concerns with the French in these terms, “. . . to be perfectly blunt about it, we don't trust the French.”<sup>19</sup> Military cooperation under such circumstances is challenging.

### Notes

1 H.W. Brands, “The Four Schoolmasters,” *National Interest*, Issue 66 (Winter 2001/02), pages 143-144.

2 Lt Col Hal Bidlack, USAF, Ph.D., United States Air Force Institute of National Security Studies, interview by author, 1 April 2002. Note that Lt Col Bidlack also maintains a web site, <http://www.hamiltonlives.com/> pertaining to the role of Alexander Hamilton in American History.

## Notes

3 Robert A. Peterson, "A Tale of Two Revolutions," *Freeman*, August 1989, n.p., on-line, Internet, 2 April 2002, available from <http://www.self-gov.org/freeman/8908pete.htm>.

4 Errera and Delon interview.

5 William T. Johnsen and Thomas-Durell Young, "French Policy Toward NATO: Enhanced Selectivity, Vice Rapprochement," Research Report (Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 1994), pages 3-4.

6 George Armstrong Kelly, *Lost Soldiers: The French Army and Empire in Crisis, 1947-1962* (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1965), pages 341-342.

7 Leo Michel, Director, NATO Policy, Office of the Secretary of Defense, interviewed by the author, 16 October 2001.

8 Errera and Delon interview.

9 Bronson interview.

10 Michel interview.

11 Christopher Davis, French Desk Officer, United States Department of State, interviewed by the author, 19 October 2001.

12 European Diplomat (1) interview.

13 European Diplomat (2) interview.

14 Edwy Plenel, "Paris denonce l'espionnage de la CIA en France," *Le Monde*, 23 February 1995.

15 Robert Baer, *See No Evil: The True Story of a Ground Soldier in the CIA's War on Terrorism* (New York, Crown Publishers, 2002), pages 136-140.

16 "Telecommunications, Satellites Said to be Targeted for Espionage by France," *Common Carrier Week*, 17 May 1993.

17 J.A.C. Lewis, "French major jailed for treason," *Jane's Defense Weekly*, 14 December 2001, n.p.

18 Daniel McGrory, "Phone Trap for French 'Traitor' Who Saved Karadzic," *London Times*, 4 March 2002, n.p., on-line, Internet, 25 March 2002, available from <https://ca.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/ebird.cgi>.

19 Michael Gonzalez, "Can America Trust the French?" *Wall Street Journal*, 23 November 1999, A22.

## Chapter 6

### **Suggestions for Improving Military Cooperation**

*As for the future, your task is not to foresee it, but to enable it.*

— Antoine-Marie-Roger de Saint-Exupery

Military cooperation with France in the future can, nonetheless, be improved. With an understanding of why French national strength means military cooperation with France is desirable, how the French perceive Americans, the basis on which the French perceptions are built, and additional factors that complicate the relationship, how can we go about improving the potential for military cooperation with the French? Here are six suggestions.

#### **Consult Early and in Proper Sequence**

First, consult the French early and in an appropriate sequence among allies. Consulting the French is the key suggestion to which the following five suggestions directly relate. Consulting the French is critical to improved military cooperation with France because it addresses the primary shortfalls in the present security relationship. First, the mere act of consultation signals American respect, the absence of which the French have resented in the past. Second, consultation, per se, blunts the French charge of American unilateralism, objection to which is strongly suggested in the French public opinion polls and has been publicly articulated by French government officials. Third,

American consultation with a leader of Europe, namely France, suggests that Foreign Minister Vedrine's vision of a European pole in a multipolar world is, in fact, emerging. Fourth, consultation with France enhances French prestige, a French objective since World War II.

Consultation, however, cannot be perceived as "last minute." Such was the apparent French perception in Operation El Dorado Canyon. Americans did approach the French for overflight authorization prior to the operation, possibly assuming that their action constituted consultation of the French. However, French Foreign Minister Raimond's words—"it would have meant agreeing to be associated with measures that had been decided unilaterally by the United States without consultation"—indicate the French did not construe the late coordination as proper consultation.

Moreover, consultation must take place in a sequence that the French view as appropriate. As French expert Harvey Feigenbaum, Assistant Dean of the Elliott School of International Relations and Professor of Political Science and International Relations at George Washington University, points out, the French acknowledge the closer relationship between the United States and the United Kingdom. They would not, therefore, generally expect to be consulted before the British. However, the French would expect to be consulted prior to less powerful European countries and would take offense at being consulted after them.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, American consultation with allies should not be limited to the French. American consultation of the other European allies is also critical if America is to overcome its unilateralist image. Additionally, through such multilateral consultation,

America can build momentum with which to counter strong French political influence in Europe should France decide to resist American defense policy.

### **Treat France as a Skeptical Audience**

Second, while consulting France and in proposing military cooperation, treat France as a skeptical audience. Post-World War II history contradicts any assumption that France is a friendly audience, eager to please the Americans by agreeing to proposed military cooperation. Consider, for instance, French insistence upon reestablishing its colonial empire following World War II despite American opposition, disruptive French withdrawal from the integrated military structure of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, refusal to allow American overflight rights during Operation El Dorado Canyon, and refusal to rejoin the integrated military structure following the debate over command of Allied Forces Southern Europe. While the view of France as a friendly audience could be caused by an insufficient grasp of Franco-American history or by arrogance, it nonetheless leads to the wrong approach when dealing with the French.

As opposed to the friendly audience, the skeptical audience will demand to know why it should cooperate and will want details of the proposed military cooperation. The mere expression of American desire for French military cooperation will be inadequate. The skeptical French audience will also listen carefully for an indication that the American spokesperson has taken the time to consider the French perspective and is prepared to address it, as opposed to ignore it. Demonstrated understanding of the French perspective will also serve to mollify historical French concerns with lack of American deference to the French position.

If we take French Foreign Minister Vedrine at his word, any American proposal for French military cooperation will be suspect by its very nature. Foreign Minister Vedrine suggests that world affairs are unbalanced and in need of a “counterweight” as long as it is unipolar. Presently, the world is unipolar and the United States constitutes its single pole. The American argument for cooperation must, therefore, be adequately persuasive to overcome this resistance. An argument assuming a skeptical audience would logically include persuasive elements.

### **Consider Potential French Responses**

Third, consider ahead of time potential French responses to American proposals for military cooperation. In response to such proposals, the French can generally apply the military, economic, and political instruments of their national power in three ways, namely by obstruction of American defense policy with which it disagrees, facilitation of American defense policy with which it agrees, or by passive observation. French obstruction can be both subtle and effective, especially with regard to influencing fellow Europeans to follow the French lead, as opposed to the American lead. Consider the examples of French success in persuading the Europeans to support the European Security and Defense Identity and Galileo. Consider, also, the lengths to which France is willing to go to demonstrate its independence as in the example of Foreign Minister Vedrine refusing to sign the Warsaw Declaration—remarkable for a country whose advertised major foreign policy goals include encouragement of “peace, democracy and development within the international community . . . .”<sup>2</sup>

While the French can apply their strength to obstruct American defense policy, they can also apply their strength to facilitate American defense policy. As Deputy Assistant

Secretary of Defense Lisa Bronson points out, who has greater expertise in Francophone Africa if not France?<sup>3</sup> Would American military operations in Francophone Africa not have a greater chance of success with French cooperation? Consider the numbers. In the former French colony of Chad, for instance, deployed American military personnel in 1994 numbered five. The corresponding number for the French was approximately twelve hundred.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to the potential for obstructive or complementary application of French strength, the French can also opt not to apply their strength. This is the point Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Bronson was making when she referred to unwanted dissent during periods of crisis. In other words, the more successful American spokesperson is the one who can convince French colleagues not interested in military cooperation to observe, as opposed to obstruct, American military operations or plans.

The prudent American spokesperson will gauge the likely French response to the American request for military cooperation ahead of time. If he foresees unwillingness on the part of the French to cooperate, he should craft a persuasive argument on why the French should at least not obstruct those particular American military plans or operations. The persuasive qualities of a pre-planned argument generally exceed those of an argument hastily crafted on the spot.

### **Involve the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Presidential Palace**

Fourth, involve the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Presidential Palace in consultations and in proposals for French military cooperation. Such involvement is based upon the superior status of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Presidential Palace where defense policy is concerned within the French system. The temptation is to

assume that American Department of Defense representatives should do business exclusively with French Minister of Defense representatives. In fact, American Department of Defense representatives should also do business with representatives of the French Foreign Ministry as well as the Presidential Palace.

Given a grasp of the domestic status of the French Ministry of Defense, one could plausibly argue that starting with the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the Presidential Palace would be more logical than starting with the French Ministry of Defense. In practice, most discussion at the Pentagon of defense policy with the French routinely involves representation by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs but does not always involve representatives of the Ministry of Defense.<sup>5</sup>

The potential pitfall of ignoring the suggestion to coordinate with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Presidential Palace is that items agreed to exclusively with the French Ministry of Defense may be overruled within the French system, possibly leading to inconveniently late cancellation by the French. Another pitfall to avoid is that of automatically directing Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Presidential Palace representatives to their American counterparts. These French representatives are likely interested in discussing defense issues and should, therefore, be met by Department of Defense representatives.

### **Bridge the Language Divide**

Fifth, bridge the language divide. Two solutions present themselves. The first is obvious. We must train Americans to speak French. While the terrorist attacks upon New York and Washington, D.C. on 11 September 2001 highlighted the shortage of American speakers of languages found in the Middle East, shortages pre-dating the



attacks have existed among Americans speaking languages outside of the Middle East, as well. In her testimony before the Senate in September 2000, for instance, Vice Chairman for the National Intelligence Council Ellen Laipson stated, “. . . the Community's need for foreign language skills is not limited to non-European languages.”<sup>6</sup> French was specifically among the European languages she subsequently cited.

Training Americans to fluency in French is time consuming. However, fluent foreign linguists are a necessary element of our national security. The U.S. Commission on National Security reported that our government needs “. . . high-quality people with expertise in the social sciences, foreign languages, and humanities” whose existence is critical “to meet 21<sup>st</sup> century security challenges.”<sup>7</sup>

An effective alternative to American defense officials fluent in French is simultaneous translation. Action officers at the Pentagon's Joint Staff Plans and Policy Directorate (JCS/J5) have employed this alternative. They report more productive meetings due to greater understanding and French gratitude for the service, as well. Hurdles associated with simultaneous translation include cost, the requirement to coordinate well in advance, and the need for proper security clearances for the translator who may deal with classified dialogue. Accordingly, the option is not always feasible.<sup>8</sup>

### **Observe Proper Etiquette**

Sixth, observe proper etiquette when dealing with the French. Such observation is critical because no other American ally is as sensitive as France. French public opinion polls clearly indicate the extent of French sensitivity to American influence around the world and in France. Remember, over half of the French believe American influence is excessive in such areas as television and cinema. Approximately one-quarter of the

French believe American influence is excessive in cuisine and clothing. Given this level of sensitivity, a lack of manners would only serve to aggravate. On the other hand, a show of manners could placate French sensitivity.

Etiquette is a challenge when dealing with the French not only because of their sensitivity but also because of the degraded state of etiquette prevalent in the United States today. For instance, a poll conducted by Public Agenda for the Pew Charitable Trusts and released in April 2002 indicates 79 percent of Americans claim that “lack of respect and courtesy should be regarded as a serious national problem.”<sup>9</sup> Moreover, Professor of Theology Donald McCullough notes that “rudeness, incivility, violence—the news is saturated with the evidence that basic human courtesy is vanishing from our lives . . . .” He notes, also, “the neglect of common courtesy leads to the collapse of community.”<sup>10</sup> In the latter quote, the word “cooperation” could as easily be substituted for “community.”

In short, opinion polls indicate the French are sensitive and we are rude, a combination that augurs poorly for improved military cooperation. While our capacity to desensitize the French is limited, we can easily improve our etiquette. We should do so.

Overall, implementing these six suggestions would merely constitute American recognition of France as a major international player. Given France’s demonstrated national strength, such recognition is justified. Yet, seemingly gratuitous international displays of independence, such as French Foreign Minister Vedrine’s refusal to sign the Warsaw Declaration, cause one to wonder. Do the French share that high assessment of their international status, or are they single-mindedly and blindly pursuing something already attained?

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Feigenbaum interview.

<sup>2</sup> “France in the World: French Foreign Policy,” not dated, n.p., on-line, Internet, 1 April 2002, available from <http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/france/gb/politiq>.

<sup>3</sup> Bronson interview.

<sup>4</sup> Observation by author during tour of duty as Director, Office of Defense Cooperation, United States Embassy N’djamena, Chad, August 1993-June 1995.

<sup>5</sup> Observation by author during tour of duty as Country Director for France, the Netherlands, Belgium and Ireland, Office of the Secretary of Defense, April 2000-June 2001.

<sup>6</sup> Ellen Laipson, Vice Chairman, National Intelligence Council, *Statement to Senate Government Affairs Committee On Foreign Language Requirements in the Intelligence Community*, 14 September 2000.

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Commission on National Security/21st Century, *Road Map for National Security: Imperative for Change*, page 88.

<sup>8</sup> Observation by author during tour of duty as Country Director for France, the Netherlands, Belgium and Ireland, Office of the Secretary of Defense, April 2000-June 2001.

<sup>9</sup> “Land of the Rude: Americans in New Survey Say Lack of Respect is Getting Worse,” Emily Post Institute, 3 April 2002, n.p., on-line, Internet, 18 April 2002, available from [http://www.emilypost.com/releases/news\\_rudeness\\_survey.htm](http://www.emilypost.com/releases/news_rudeness_survey.htm).

<sup>10</sup> Donald McCullough, *Say Please, Say Thank You* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1998), page 4.

## Chapter 7

### Conclusion

*The materials of action are variable, but the use we make of them should be constant.*

— Epictetus

In conclusion, military cooperation with the French has historically been a mixed bag. Nonetheless, it has been vital to both countries at certain points in history. America may not have been born in the absence of French military cooperation. France, on the other hand, may not have survived in democratic form in the absence of American military cooperation. Future military cooperation is likely to be a mixed bag, as well. French sensitivity to American unilateralism shows no sign of abating and, in reaction to the ongoing growth of globalization, is likely to increase over the mid-term.

If the United States, France, and Europe operated within a vacuum, predictions regarding the future of Franco-American military cooperation would be less difficult. However, the United States, France, and Europe do not operate within a vacuum, as made clear by the terrorist attacks upon New York and Washington, D.C. on 11 September 2001. Such threats to the West tend, at least in the short term, to quell internecine bickering and to foster cooperation. The longevity of such cooperation, however, is unclear.

Yet, the Western camp itself may be splitting and threats to the West, therefore, less conducive to mutual cooperation. The European Union and the leading French role within it appear to be making steady gains. A fully integrated European Union with a truly capable European Security and Defense Identity could in due course constitute the European pole in French Foreign Minister Vedrine's multipolar world. Under such conditions, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization could become redundant, a "relic," as former Defense Secretary Cohen once described the possibility.

In any case, with France continuing its unique membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization or among the European leaders of an independent European Security and Defense Identity or in some other security arrangement, French significance would likely remain high, as French strength in military, economic and political terms shows no signs of abating. French military cooperation, therefore, would remain preferable to French obstruction, and the observation of the six suggestions to improve the potential for military cooperation would remain fitting.

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